

October which diluted the solution of soda in the water of the lake.

Late in November Mr. Brown estimated the number of young at about 400,000, which would give a breeding success of rather less than 50%. Further mortality occurred later among the last-hatched young owing to the parents having to fly long distances to get food (to Lake Natron and back, a good sixty miles a day). Even so, making allowances for the unusual conditions, the proportion of breeding success would not compare very unfavourably with that in a normal year in the usual breeding ground in the centre of Lake Natron.

The tragedy has a redeeming feature in so far as the big organisation set up for rescuing the young made it possible to ring the flamingos on a large scale. As was mentioned in 'Notes and News' in our last issue, 8000 young Lesser Flamingo were ringed. It is hoped that some definite information about the migratory movements of the two species of flamingo will now be obtained.

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,

91, WALKESHWAR ROAD,

BOMBAY 6-WB,

June 17, 1963.

EDITORS

#### 6. ON THE ALLEGED INFERIORITY OF THE SOUTHERN GRACKLE [*GRACULA RELIGIOSA INDICA* (CUVIER)] AS A TALKING BIRD

A conversation I had recently with Mr. K. I. Mathew, State Wild Life Officer of Kerala, suggests an explanation for the widespread belief that Pahari Mynas from north India (*Gracula religiosa intermedia* and *G. r. peninsularis*) are better talkers and learn more readily than south Indian birds (*G. r. indica*), a belief that bird dealers take advantage of by asking for ridiculously high prices. The majority of the birds that come from Gorakhpur, U.P., and from eastern and northern central India are taken as nestlings; they are therefore reared in captivity and become conditioned to human handling and the sophisticated noises of human society. As against this, I learn from Mr. Mathew that in Kerala these birds are caught with bird lime when they collect in large flocks to feed on the nectar of the freely flowering forest shrub *Helicteres isora*; that is to say, their training does not begin till they are adult. To my suggestion that the few

southern birds that talk well may be hand-reared, Mr. Mathew confirmed that fledglings taken at the nest do, in fact, learn to talk quite proficiently.

During the ornithological survey in Orissa in 1950, I learnt that the right to collect Pahari Myna nestlings was auctioned along with other forest rights, and at a royalty of 4 annas (=25 nP.) per bird brought the State an annual income of about Rs. 3000. This, along with nestlings destroyed or unaccounted for in the process of collecting, represents an enormous drain, the effect of which calls for serious consideration.

33, PALI HILL,  
BANDRA,  
BOMBAY 50,  
June 6, 1963.

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7. OCCURRENCE OF THE VERDITER FLYCATCHER,  
*MUSCICAPA THALASSINA THALASSINA* SWAINSON  
(PASSERIFORMES : MUSCICAPIDAE) IN KATHIAWAR  
PENINSULA

The Verditer Flycatcher (*Muscicapa thalassina thalassina* Swainson) is so far not recorded from the peninsula of Kathiawar, although it is known to over-winter in the greater part of northern and peninsular India. Dharmakumarsinhji (1954, BIRDS OF SAURASHTRA : 429) lists the bird as not recorded from Saurashtra, but occurring in the mainland of Gujarat. Therefore, it was of interest to notice the occurrence of this bird in the Gir forest of Saurashtra which I had occasion to visit during November-December 1962. Three specimens of this bird were seen on 10 December 1962 at Chhodawadi in the Jamwala Range, on the forest track leading to Jasadhar, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  kilometre from the Forest Rest House. The area was light forest adjacent to hillside where the undergrowth was burnt out, probably to facilitate timber operations. The birds were darting about among the denuded branches of the trees (*Salmalia malabarica*) on the forest roads and making short sallies after insects. Baker (1924, FAUNA OF BRITISH INDIA, BIRDS 2 : 239-240) speaks of the bird as very sociable and often to be seen moving about in pairs. The birds seen by me seemed to be moving about alone. They are said to be not common in Gujarat; this seems to be the case here also, as they were not seen again in a stay of approximately a month.